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November 19, 2003

The Honorable Jessie Hill Roberson
Assistant Secretary for Environment Management
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-0104

Dear Ms. Roberson:

We have understood the great significance that long-term stewardship will play in the lives of the Fernald community since we first made recommendations on the future land uses of the Fernald site in 1995. We believe that effective and comprehensive long-term stewardship is the single most important issue for the Fernald Citizens Advisory Board (FCAB) and by far the most pressing responsibility for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The FCAB believes that ongoing protection of human health and the environment and fulfillment of the Stakeholders' Vision for the Future of Fernald will require DOE to go beyond what it currently considers to be its obligations for long-term surveillance and monitoring (LTSM) and records management. Ensuring that it is able to do so successfully depends on collaboration among the DOE Office of Environmental Management, Office of Legacy Management, and the Fernald Community.

Ongoing Protection of Human Health and the Environment

Because community members are the only entities that will maintain a continuous presence near Fernald, they will play a critical role in stewardship of the site. In its 2002 report, *Telling the Story of Fernald*, the FCAB coined the term **Community-Based Stewardship** to describe the active involvement of those living and working near a site in its ongoing management. The success of Community-Based Stewardship will depend on well-informed and aware community members—now and in the future—who have immediate access to up-to-date, user-friendly information. There are several ways in which Community-Based Stewardship will protect human health and the environment:

- Community members will be aware of what risks remain at the site and will be better able to manage their exposure to those risks.
- The community will provide continuous oversight of the integrity of engineered and institutional controls.
- Future generations will understand the risk-based process used to make cleanup decisions at Fernald and the crucial role that the public played in making those decisions. This will prevent future calls for additional, costly remediation of the site.

Fulfillment of the Stakeholder Vision for the Future of Fernald

In 1999, the FCAB adopted the Stakeholder Vision for the Future of Fernald, which emphasizes education of this and future generations as the primary future use of the site. The DOE Office of Environmental Management has largely adopted this vision and has based its cleanup decisions on this anticipated end use of the Fernald site.

Fernald Stakeholders envision a Future for the Fernald property that creates a federally owned regional destination for educating this and future generations about the rich and varied history of Fernald. We envision a community resource that serves the ongoing information needs of area residents, education needs of local academic institutions, and reinterment of Native American remains. We envision a safe, secure, and partially accessible site, integrated with the surrounding community that effectively protects human health and the environment from all residual contamination and fully maintains all aspects of the ecological restoration

By drawing people to the site for educational purposes, the Fernald site would become an important asset to a community that has sacrificed much during production and cleanup. Local citizens continue to be gravely concerned that the stigma of a dormant and abandoned site, which contains such a large disposal facility and has much higher concentrations of uranium in the soil than normal, will remain a liability for the Fernald community's image and economic growth. Alternatively, if established as an educational destination for the people of Southwest Ohio, the Fernald site could instead communicate many positive messages about the history of the site and its current conditions:

- Historical messages range from the community's role in the Cold War to the power of local environmental activism.
- Cultural lessons include the past and present significance of the site to Native Americans.
- Science-based messages include not just lessons regarding radiological risks, but also the importance of groundwater, the ecological restoration of a former industrial site, and the flora and fauna of Southwest Ohio.

In addition, the site holds many opportunities for university-level research on environmental conditions, long-term management of legacy wastes, ecological restoration of remediated sites, community health impacts, and the ongoing sociological and economic impacts of closed sites.

Recommendations

For these reasons, the FCAB believes that ensuring ongoing education and outreach to this and future generations at the Fernald site is a primary responsibility of DOE. *Telling the Story of Fernald* provides many recommendations for how DOE could meet community information needs locally and at a national level. While DOE has responded to those recommendations in general terms, it has failed to take serious action or provide assurances that citizens' concerns will be addressed. Given the immediacy of site closure and the knowledge that activities that are not well underway by that time will have little chance of success, the FCAB believes that these issues require more specific and immediate action by DOE. Therefore, the FCAB has revisited the issue and feels compelled to provide the following specific recommendations to DOE:

1. DOE should acknowledge the critical role of the community as stewards of the Fernald site in all site-specific planning documents.
2. DOE should engage in open discussions with organizations and individuals that have an interest in serving the community's long-term information and education needs.
3. DOE should endorse, promote, and provide long-term funding mechanisms, such as grants and trusts, for the following activities:
 - a. Development of user-friendly information resources, focused on meeting the needs identified by the Fernald community
 - b. Establishment of a new organization or coalition of interests with a mission to provide ongoing education and information to the Fernald community
 - c. Creation of a comprehensive and descriptive catalog of site photographs and artifacts
 - d. Transfer of photographs, artifacts, and copies of critical records to an independent entity that is committed and prepared to archive these materials

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- e. Development and implementation of school curricula, teaching materials, and teacher training programs.
4. DOE should provide a facility at, or adjacent to, the Fernald site, at which community education activities can occur and photographs, artifacts, and copies of critical records can be stored.
5. DOE should include community education and access to user-friendly information as a critical institutional control in the appropriate legally binding stewardship documents for the Fernald site, including the Institutional Control Plan.
6. DOE should guide organizations that will serve as stewards for the Fernald site, including those who will conduct long-term surveillance and monitoring activities and natural resource management, as to the primary role of the community in long-term stewardship and direct them to work cooperatively with individuals and organizations that seek to meet community information needs.

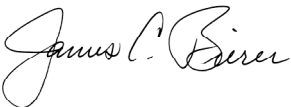
Conclusion

For the past decade, the FCAB has worked closely with DOE, its regulators, and the community to facilitate the safe, efficient, and effective remediation of the Fernald site. With site closure imminent and DOE's presence in the community diminishing, the FCAB is concerned that DOE will reap the benefits of the FCAB's support for the site remedy (such as less stringent cleanup standards, on-site disposal of low-level waste, and no backfilling of excavation areas) but will not ensure a positive legacy for the Fernald site. We believe that adoption of these recommendations by DOE will go a long way in answering our concerns.

We realize that the Office of Environmental Management has transferred the majority of these responsibilities to the newly formed Office of Legacy Management. Because we have no formal relationship with that office, and they do not yet have a plan in place for Fernald, our concerns that the site will close without adequate attention to long-term stewardship are heightened.

We look forward to your response to these recommendations and invite you to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



James C. Bierer
FCAB Chair



Lisa Crawford
FCAB Vice-Chair

cc:

Mike Owen, Office of Legacy Management
Dave Geiser, Office of Legacy Management
Bob Warther, DOE-Ohio
Gary Stegner, DOE-Fernald